

TALES OF WAR AND PEACE—By RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

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IN their home town of Keepsburg, the Keeps were the reigning dynasty, socially and in every way. Old man Keep was president of the trolley line, the telephone company, and the Keep National Bank. But Fred, his son, and the heir apparent, did not inherit the business ability of his father; or, if he did, he took pains to conceal that fact.

When Fred arranged an alliance with Winnie Platt, who also was of the innermost inner set of Keepsburg, everybody said Keepsburg would soon lose them. And everybody was right. When single, each had sighed for other social worlds to conquer, and when they combined their fortunes and ambitions they found Keepsburg impossible, and they left it to lay siege to New York. They were too crafty to at once attack New York itself. A widow lady they met while on their honeymoon at Palm Beach had told them not to attempt that. And as she was the Palm Beach correspondent of a society paper they naturally accepted her advice.

They agreed with the lady correspondent that it was far better to advance leisurely; first firmly to intrench themselves in the suburbs, and then to enter New York, not as the Keeps from Keepsburg, which meant nothing, but as the Fred Keeps, of Long Island, or Westchester, or Bordentown.

The point from which the Keeps elected to launch their attack was Scarborough-on-the-Hudson. But the attack did not succeed. Something went wrong. They began to fear that the lady correspondent had given them the wrong dope. For, although three months had passed, and they had played golf together until they were loath to clasp a golf club as a red-hot poker, they knew no one, and no one knew them. That is, they did not know the Van Wardens; and if you lived at Scarborough and were not recognized by the Van Wardens, you were not to be found on any map.

Since the days of Hendrik Hudson the country seat of the Van Wardens had looked down upon the river that bears his name, and ever since those days the Van Wardens had looked down upon everybody else. They were so proud that at all their gates they had placed signs reading, "No horses allowed. Take the other road." The other road was an earth road used by tradespeople from Ossining; the road reserved for the Van Wardens and automobiles was of bluestone. It helped greatly to give the Van Warden estate the appearance of a well-kept cemetery. And those Van Wardens who occupied the country place were as cold and unsocial as the sort of people who occupy cemeteries—except "Harry" Van Warden, and he lived in New York at the Turf Club.

Harry, according to all local tradition—for he frequently motored out to Warden Koop, the Van Warden country seat—and, according to the newspapers, was a devil of a fellow and in no sense cold or unsocial. So far as the Keeps read of him, he was always being arrested for speeding, or breaking his collar bone out hunting, or losing his front teeth at polo. This greatly annoyed the proud sisters at Warden Koop; not because Harry was arrested or had broken his collar bone, but because it dragged the family name into the newspapers.

The country place of the Keeps was completely satisfactory, and for the purposes of their social comedy the stage setting was perfect. The house was one they had rented from a man of charming taste and inflated fortune; and with it they had taken over his well-disciplined butler, his pictures, furniture, family silver, and linen. It stood upon an eminence, was heavily wooded, and surrounded by many gardens; but its chief attraction was an artificial lake well stocked with trout that lay directly below the terrace of the house and also in full view from the road to Albany.

This latter fact caused Winnie Keep much concern. In the neighborhood were many Italian laborers, and on several nights the fish had tempted these born poachers to trespass; and more than once, on hot summer evenings, small boys from Tarrytown and Ossining had broken through the hedge, and used the lake as a swimming pool.

"It makes me nervous," complained Winnie. "I don't like the idea of people prowling around so near the house. And think of those twelve hundred convicts, not one mile away, in Sing Sing. Most of them are burglars, and if they ever get out, our house is the very first one they'll break into."

"I haven't caught anybody in this neighborhood breaking into our house yet," said Fred, "and I'd be glad to see even a burglar!"

They were seated on the brick terrace that overlooked the lake. It was just before the dinner hour, and the dusk of a wonderful October night had fallen on the hedges, the clumps of evergreens, the rows of close-clipped box. A full moon was just showing itself above the treetops, turning the lake into moving silver. Fred rose from his wicker chair and, crossing to his young bride, touched her hair fearfully with the tips of his fingers.

"What if we don't know anybody, Win," he said, "and nobody knows us? It's been a perfectly good honeymoon, hasn't it? If you just look at it that way, it works out all right. We came here really for our honeymoon, to be together, to be alone."

As though mocking his words, there burst upon the sleeping countryside the shriek of a giant siren. It was raucous, virulent, insulting. It came as sharply as a scream of terror, it continued in a bellow of rage. Then, as suddenly as it had cried aloud, it sank to silence; only after a pause of an instant, as though giving a signal, to shriek again in two sharp blasts. And then again it broke into the hideous long-drawn scream of rage, insistent, breathless, commanding; filling the soul of him who heard it, even of the innocent, with alarm.

"In the name of heaven!" gasped Keep, "what's that?"

Down the terrace the butler was hastening toward them. When he stopped, he spoke as though he were announcing dinner. "A convict, sir," he said, "has escaped from Sing Sing. I thought you might not understand the whistle. I thought perhaps you would wish Mrs. Keep to come indoors."

"Why?" asked Winnie Keep.

"The house is near the road, madam," said the butler. "And there are so many trees and bushes. Last summer two of them hid here, and the keeps—there was a fight."

The man glanced at Keep. Fred touched his wife on the arm.

"It's time to dress for dinner, Win," he said.

"And what are you going to do?" demanded Winnie.

"I'm going to finish this cigar first. It doesn't take me long to change." He turned to the butler. "And I'll have a cocktail, too. I'll have it out here."

The servant left them, but in the French window that opened from the terrace to the library Mrs. Keep lingered irresolutely. "Fred," she begged, "you—you're not going to poke around in the bushes, are you?—just because you think I'm frightened?"

Her husband laughed at her. "I certainly am not!" he said. "And you're not frightened, either. Go in. I'll be with you in a minute."

But the girl hesitated. Still shattering the silence of the night the siren shrieked relentlessly; it seemed to be at their very door, to beat and buffet the window panes. The bride shivered and held her fingers to her ears.

"Why don't they stop it!" she whispered. "Why don't they give him a chance?"

When she had gone, Fred pulled one of the wicker chairs to the edge of the terrace, and, leaning forward with his chin in his hands, sat staring down at the lake. The moon had cleared the tops of the trees, had blotted the lawns with black, rigid squares, had disguised the hedges with wavering shadows. Somewhere near at hand a criminal—a murderer, burglar, thug—was at large, and the voice of the prison he had tricked still bellowed in rage, in amazement, still clamored not only for his person, but perhaps for his life.

"Find him!" shrieked the siren. "Find him! He's there, behind your hedge! He's kneeling by the stone wall. That's he running in the moonlight. That's he crawling through the dead leaves! Stop him! Drag him down! He's mine! Mine!"

As a rule, when Winnie Keep was dressing for dinner, Fred, in the room adjoining, could hear her unconsciously and lightly singing to herself. It was a habit of hers that he loved. But on this night, although her room was directly above where he sat upon the terrace, he heard no singing. He had been on the terrace for a quarter of an hour. Gridley, the aged butler who was rented with the house, and who for twenty years had been an intimate of it, had brought the cocktail and taken away the empty glass. And Keep had been alone with his thoughts. They were entirely of the convict. If the man suddenly confronted him and begged his aid, what would he do? He knew quite well what he would do. He considered even the means by which he would assist the fugitive to a successful get-away.

The ethics of the question did not concern Fred. He did not weigh his duty to the State of New York, or to society. One day, when he had visited "the in-

stitution," as a somewhat sensitive neighborhood prefers to speak of it, he was told that the chance of a prisoner's escaping from Sing Sing and not being at once retaken was one out of six thousand. So with Fred it was largely a sporting proposition. Any man who could beat a six-thousand-to-one shot commanded his admiration.

And, having settled his own course of action, he tried to imagine himself in the place of the man who at that very moment was endeavoring to escape. Were he that man, he would first, he decided, rid himself of his telltale clothing. But that would leave him naked, and in Westchester County a naked man would be quite as conspicuous as a somewhat sensitive neighborhood prefers to speak of it, he was told that the chance of a prisoner's escaping from Sing Sing and not being at once retaken was one out of six thousand. So with Fred it was largely a sporting proposition. Any man who could beat a six-thousand-to-one shot commanded his admiration.

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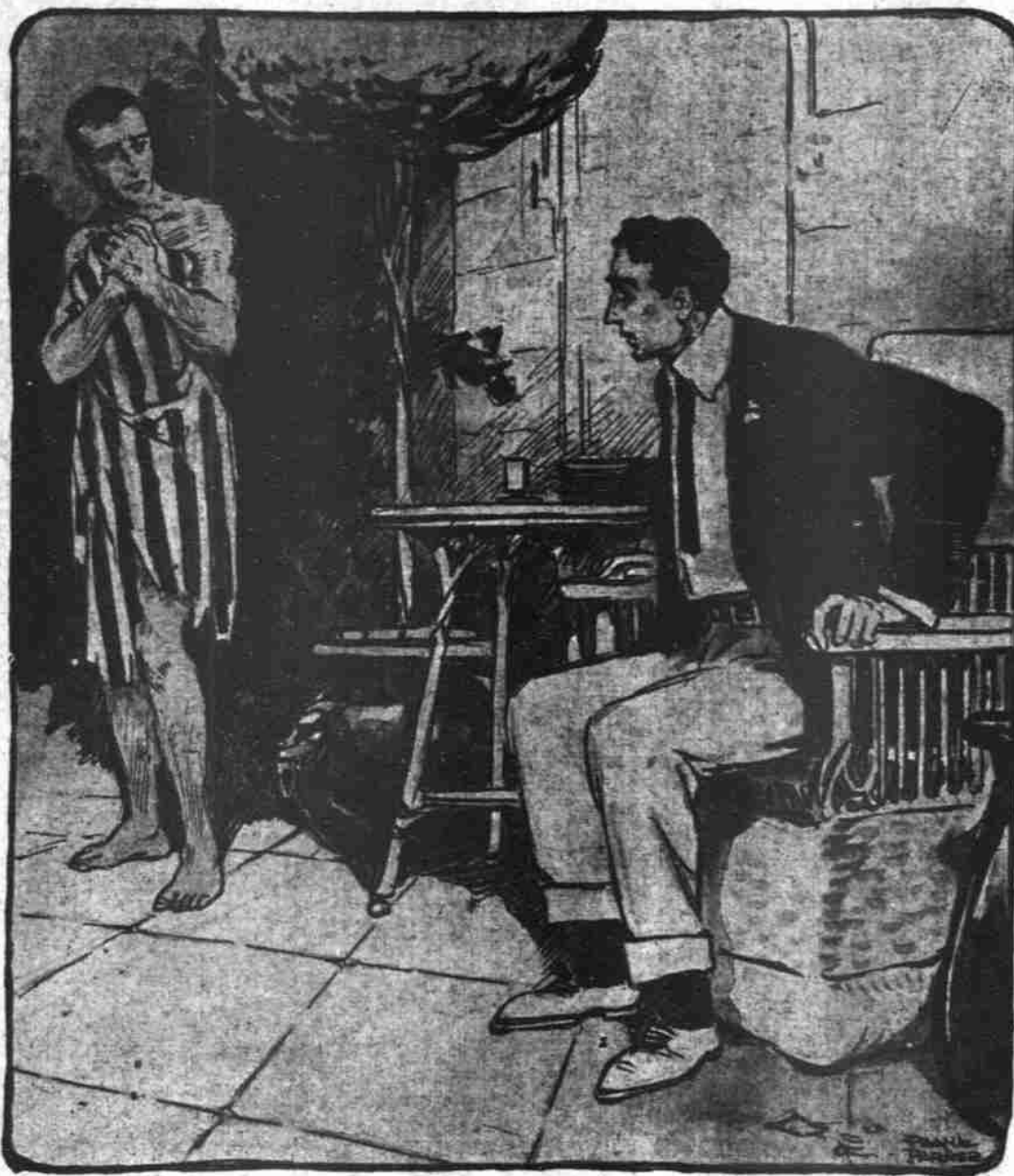
"I took a bath in your pond," he

was not in the least surprised. It was as though he had been waiting for the man, as though it had been an appointment.

Two thoughts alone concerned him: that before he could rid himself of his visitor his wife might return and take alarm, and that the man, not knowing his friendly intentions, and in a state to commit murder, might rush him. But the stranger made no hostile move, and for a moment in the moonlight the two young men eyed each other warily.

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ous as one in the purple-gray cloth of the prison. How could he obtain clothes? He might hold up a passer-by, and, if the passer-by did not flee from him or punch him into insensibility, he might effect an exchange of garments; he might by threats obtain them from some farmer; he might despoil a scarecrow.

But with none of these plans was Fred entirely satisfied. The question deeply perplexed him. How best could a naked man clothe himself? And as he sat pondering that point from the bushes a naked man emerged. He was not entirely undraped. For around his nakedness he had drawn a canvas awning. Fred recognized it as having been torn from one of the rowboats in the lake. But, except for that, the man was naked to his heels. He was a young man of Fred's own age. His hair was cut close, his face smooth shaven, and above his eye was a half-healed bruise. He had the sharp, clerical face of one who lived by evil knowledge. Water dripped from him, and either for that reason or from fright, the young man trembled, and, like one who had been running, breathed in short, hard gasps.

Fred was surprised to find that he

blurted forth, "and—and they stole my clothes! That's why I'm like this!"

Fred was consumed with envy. In comparison with this ingenious narrative how prosaic and commonplace became his own plans to rid himself of accusing garments and explain his nakedness. He regarded the stranger with admiration.

"Isn't it rather a cold night to take a bath?" he said.

As though in hearty agreement, the naked man burst into a violent fit of shivering.

"It wasn't a bath," he gasped. "It was a bet!"

"A what!" exclaimed Fred. His admiration was increasing. "A bet? Then you are not alone?"

"I am now—damn them!" exclaimed the naked one. He began again reluctantly. "We saw you from the road, you and a woman, sitting here in the light from that moon. They bet me I didn't dare strip and swim across your pond with you sitting so near. I can see now it was framed up on me from the start. For when I was swimming back I saw them run to where I'd left my clothes, and then I heard them crank up, and when I got to the hedge the car was gone!"

all right," he added, reassuringly. "I live near here."

With a start Keep raised his eyes, and, distressed by his look, the young man continued less confidently.

"I don't blame you if you don't believe it," he stammered, "seeing me like this; but I do live right near here. Everybody around here knows me, and I guess you've read about me in the papers, too. I'm—that is, my name—"

like one about to take a plunge he drew a short breath, and the ratlike eyes regarded Keep watchfully—"my name is Van Warden. I'm the one you read about—Harry—I'm Harry Van Warden!"

After a pause, slowly and reprovingly Fred shook his head; but his smile was kindly, even regretful, as though he were sorry he could not longer enjoy the stranger's confidences.

"My boy!" he exclaimed, "you're more than Van Warden! You're a genius!" He rose and made a peremptory gesture. "Sorry," he said, "but this isn't safe for either of us. Follow me, and I'll dress you up and send you where you want to go." He turned and whispered over his shoulder: "Some day let me hear from you. A man with your nerve—"

In alarm the naked one with a gesture commanded silence.

The library led to the front hall. In this was the coatroom. First making sure the library and hall were free of servants, Fred tiptoed to the coatroom and, opening the door, switched on the electric light. The naked man, leaving in his wake a trail of damp footprints, followed at his heels.

Fred pointed at golf capes, sweaters, greatcoats hanging from hooks; and on the floor at boots and overshoes.

"Put on that motor coat and the galoshes," he commanded. "They'll cover you in case you have to run for it. I'm going to leave you here while I get you some clothes. If any of the servants butt in, don't lose your head. Just say you're waiting to see me—Mr. Keep. I won't be long. Wait."

"Wait!" snorted the stranger. "You bet I'll wait!"

As Fred closed the door upon him, the naked one was rubbing himself violently with Mrs. Keep's yellow golf jacket.

In his own room Fred collected a suit of blue serge, a tennis shirt, boots, even a tie. Underclothes he found ready laid out for him, and he snatched them from the bed. From a roll of money in his bureau drawer he counted out a hundred dollars. Tacitly he slipped the money in the trousers pocket of the serge suit, and with the bundle of clothes in his arms raced downstairs and showed them into the coatroom.

"Don't come out until I knock," he commanded. "And," he added in a vehement whisper, "don't come out at all unless you have clothes on!"

The stranger grunted.

Fred rang for Gridley and told him to have his car brought around to the door. He wanted it to start at once—within two minutes. When the butler had departed, Fred, by an inch, again opened the coatroom door. The stranger had draped himself in the underclothes and the shirt, and at the moment was carefully arranging the tie.

"Hurry!" commanded Keep. "The car'll be here in a minute. Where shall I tell him to take you?"

The stranger chuckled excitedly; his confidence seemed to be returning. "New York," he whispered, "fast as he can get there! Look here," he added doubtfully, "there's a roll of bills in these clothes."

"They're yours," said Fred.

The stranger exclaimed vigorously. "You're all right!" he whispered. "I won't forget this, or you either. I'll send the money back same time I send the clothes."

"Exactly!" said Fred.

The wheels of the touring car crunched on the gravel drive, and Fred slammed to the door, and like a sentry on guard paced before it. After a period which seemed to stretch over many minutes there came from inside a cautious knocking. With equal caution Fred opened the door the width of a finger, and put his ear to the crack.

"You couldn't find me a button hook, could you?" whispered the stranger.

Indignantly Fred shut the door and, walking to the veranda, hailed the chauffeur. James, the chauffeur, was a Keepsburg boy, and when Keep had gone to Cambridge James had accompanied him. Keep knew the boy could be trusted.

"You're to take a man to New York," he said, "or wherever he wants to go. Don't talk to him. Don't ask any questions. So, if you're questioned, you can say you know nothing. That's for your own good!"

The chauffeur mechanically touched his cap and started down the steps. As he did so, the prison whistle, still unsatisfied, still demanding its prey, shattered the silence. As though it had hit him a physical blow, the youth jumped. He turned and lifted startled, inquiring eyes to where Keep stood above him.

"I told you," said Keep, "to ask no questions."

As Fred re-entered the hall, Winnie Keep was coming down the stairs toward him. She had changed to one of the prettiest evening gowns of her trousseau, and so outrageous lovely was the combination of herself and the gown that her husband's excitement and anxiety fell from him, and he was lost in admiration. But he was not for long lost. To his horror, the door of the coat closet opened toward his wife and out of the closet the stranger emerged.

Winnie, not accustomed to seeing young men suddenly appear from among the dustcoats, uttered a sharp shriek.

With what he considered great presence of mind, Fred swung upon the visitor.

"Did you fix it?" he demanded.

The visitor did not heed him. "In amazement," in abject admiration, his eyes were fastened upon the beautiful and radiant vision presented by Winnie Keep. But he also still preserved sufficient presence of mind to nod his head dully.

"Come," commanded Fred. "The car is waiting."

Still the stranger did not move. As though he had never before seen a woman, as though by dazzling loveliness held him in a trance, he stood still, gazing, gaping, devouring Winnie with his eyes. In her turn, Winnie beheld a strange youth who looked like a groom out of livery, so overcome by her mere presence as to be struck motionless and inarticulate. For protection she moved in some alarm toward her husband.

The stranger gave a sudden jerk of his body that might have been intended for a bow. Before Keep could interrupt him, like a parrot reciting its lesson, he exclaimed explosively: "My name's Van Warden. I'm Harry Van Warden."

He seemed as little convinced of the truth of his statement as though he had announced that he was the Czar of Russia. It was as though a stage manager had drilled him in the lines.

But upon Winnie, as her husband saw to his dismay, the words produced an instant and appalling effect. She fairly radiated excitement and delight. How her husband had succeeded in capturing the social prize of Scarborough she could not imagine, but, for doing so, she flashed toward him a glance of deep and grateful devotion.

Then she beamed upon the stranger. "Won't Mr. Van Warden stay to dinner?" she asked.

Her husband emitted a howl. "He will not!" he cried. "He's not that kind of a Van Warden. He's a plumber. He's the man that fixes the telephone!"

He seized the visitor by the sleeve of the long motor coat and dragged him down the steps. Reluctantly, almost resistingly, the visitor stumbled after him, casting backward amazed glances at the beautiful lady. Fred thrust him into the seat beside the chauffeur, at the golf cap and automobile in which the stranger was stupidly standing in his hands, Fred whispered to him:

"Put those on! Cover you up! Don't speak! The man knows you!"

With eager eyes and parted lips the chauffeur, was waiting for him. Fred nodded sharply, the chauffeur stooped to throw in the motor coat, and then, as Fred stepped into the car, he hurriedly threw himself upon the something in a suit of purple something torn and bleeding, with sweat and dirt; something cringed and crawled; that tried and sank back upon its knees to the glare of the headlights that face and white hair of a very old man. The kneeling figure the sobs rising from far down pit of the stomach, wrenching like waves of nausea. It stretched his arms toward them, long disuse his voice cracked and

"I'm done!" he sobbed. "I'm no farther! I give myself up!"

Above the awed silence of the four young people, the prison shrieked in one long, mocking triumph.

It was the stranger who was to act. Pushing past Fred, and from his own shoulders the long coat, he flung it over the suit of gray. The goggles he clapped on his forehead, and, as he pulled down over the white one arm he lifted the coin with the other dragged and put into the seat beside the chauffeur the hands of the chauffeur the roll of bills.

"Get him away!" he ordered only twelve miles to the Co. line. As soon as you're across clothes and a ticket to Bo through White Plains to G. and then you're safe!"

As though suddenly remembering the presence of the owner of the swung upon Fred. "Am I demanded."

"Of course!" roared Fred. His arm at the chauffeur a throwing him into space.

"Get-to-hell-out-of-here!" he roared. The chauffeur, by professional, but by birth a human being, led savagely and this time thrutch. With a grinding of racing car leaped into the night rear lamp winking in farewell, James answering the great strain in jeering notes of joy tory.

Fred had supposed that at moment the younger convict to leap to the running board, but the stranger remained motionless.

Fred shouted impotently after the flying car, in dismay he seized the stranger by the arm.

"But you?" he demanded. "How are you going to get away?"

The stranger turned appealingly to where upon the upper step stood Winnie Keep.

"I don't want to get away," he said. "I was hoping, maybe, you'd let me stay to dinner."

A terrible and icy chill crept down the spine of Fred Keep. He moved so that the light from the hall fell full upon the face of the stranger.

"Will you kindly tell me," Fred demanded, "who the devil you are?"

The stranger exclaimed peevishly. "I've been telling you all evening. I'm Harry Van Warden!"

Upon the face of Gridley appeared a smile it never had been the privilege of Fred Keep to behold. The butler beamed upon the stranger fondly, proudly, with the right of long acquaintance, tanship, with the affection of an old friend. Still beaming, he bowed to Keep.

"It's Mr. Harry—Mr. Van Warden," he said, "is to stay to dinner, might I suggest, that he is very partial to the Paul Vibert, 84."

Fred gazed stupidly from his butler to the stranger and then at his wife. She was again radiantly beautiful and smilingly happy.

Gridley coughed tentatively. "Shall I open a bottle, sir?" he asked.

Hoplessly Fred tossed his arms heavenward.

"Open a case!" he roared.

At 10 o'clock, when they were still at table and reaching a state of such mutual appreciation that soon they would be calling each other by their first names, Gridley brought in a written message he had taken from the telephone. It was a long-distance call from Yonkers, sent by James, the faithful chauffeur.

Fred read it aloud. "I got that party the articles he needed," it read, "and saw him safe on a train to Boston. On the way back I got arrested for speeding the car on the way down. Please send money. I am in a cell in Yonkers."